

Preamble

This submission thanks the 2010 and Beyond Panel for the opportunity to present a considered response to the Questions raised by the timely and valuable consultation process initiated by the Minister of State (Sport), the Honorable Gary Lunn, MP. The submission deals with the challenges facing the development of functional skills, abilities and overall organizational capacity levels within the administration of Canada's high performance sport support infrastructure. Whilst recognition of this issue is not directly articulated in the consultation's guidelines, it is far from peripheral in the drive for excellence in Canadian high performance sport. Indeed, the challenge it represents for the overall sport system is at least equal to that being faced by athletes and coaches in that without the focusing of adequate and appropriate resources on the administrative elements that can impact on athletic success on the world stage, system optimization is an unlikely outcome. In other words, if the administrators running Canada's high performance sport systems are not provided with an appropriate framework for dynamic organizational capacity development, designed to raise overall administrative skill and ability levels to consistently be the best in the world, the strong possibility exists that when Canadian high performance athletes compete on international and world stages their preparations will not be as complete as they could and should be.

Question Responses

In response to **Question 1** regarding the strategies that need to be implemented to improve the international performances of Canadian athletes, this submission observes that, whilst the focus of the 2010 and Beyond Panel is on improving the international achievements of Canada's high performance athletes and the associated coaching system in the post-2010 era, the organizational capacity of the Canadian sport system's administrative infrastructure supporting these athletes and their coaches on the track to success must not be ignored as it plays a vital, yet often unseen, role in enabling athletes to compete and succeed at the highest level of their ability in international and world events.

Consequently, from a high-level strategic perspective, and parallel to the task of developing high performance athletes and coaches, there is urgent need for a integrative strategy at the highest level for developing organizational capacity within the Canadian high performance sport system by providing an academic framework for lifelong learning and continuing professional development within which the skills and abilities of administrators working within the support infrastructure are given the opportunity to improve to a level that, at minimum, equals the best in the world, and then maintains that status. This critical undertaking needs high visibility, recognition and adequate resourcing to succeed, for to expect long-term improvement and success from one side of the system without a commensurate development of the other is unrealistic: such imbalance will, over time, inhibit the success of Canadian high performance athletes and their coaches.

Question 2 asks if changes to the design, structure, accountability, governance and/or leadership of high performance sport in Canada would help the delivery of strategies discussed above. This submission responds affirmatively. Continuing from the above point, a majority of the dedicated and passionate non- and ex- athletes whose everyday employment revolves around the above-mentioned organizational components of high performance sport in Canada operate within an extremely resource-bound environment. The sterling efforts of these paid individuals are enriched by the inputs of many enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers, without whose passion and support the system would collapse. However, and whilst sincerely lauding and valorizing the current work of amateur sport organizations involved in high performance competitions under such constrained circumstances, anecdotal evidence exists that their operational capacity can be compromised due to the limited pool of ability, experience and skill they can draw on to derive appropriate world-class responses and solutions to the professionally-challenging situations they encounter daily, particularly in the run-up to international and world competitions when existing resources are under maximum duress: too often managers are forced to ‘fight fires’ when they should be creating and enabling strategic visions for the future success of the athletes and coaches they support.

Consequently, systemic changes need to be made within Canadian high performance sport to facilitate a recognition and understanding of the administrative

requirements imposed by the unique and demanding environment of international competition on these resource-hungry, often small, organizational units. Whilst a wide range of Canadian high performance athletes achieve exceptional success with limited resources, the system does not optimize all its available organizational capacity at every level of the complex hierarchy of interconnected agencies, organizations and federations across Canada to ensure that: (i) every athlete is allowed to develop in the most efficient environment conducive to the delivery of success on the international stage; and (ii) every individual working in the sport 'delivery system' is enabled to develop their abilities and skills to the maximum and leverage their experience optimally to thereby contribute at the highest level.

However, it is the contention of this response that if the on-going skills development requirements of the administrative infrastructure of Canada's high performance sport system were audited, clearly understood and subsequently adequately resourced the administrative side of the Canadian sport system would achieve new levels of ability, efficiency and skill that would be equal to that of the high performance athletes and coaches they support. At the same time this infrastructure would continue to ease the passage of high performance athletes to success on the world stage and help them build on the solid foundation of the current and positive momentum witnessed over the past several years.

The **third Question** posed by the Panel addresses issues of governance and leadership in relation to funding partners. Currently the role of the administrative organization in the success of high performance athlete success is largely overlooked: all funding partners within the high performance sport system need to be aware of the tripartite and symbiotic relationship that exists between high performance athletes, coaches and the administrative system that facilitates their development and success. This submission strongly suggests that the unexplored relationship between the funding of athlete and coach development and that of organizational administrative capacity development in the pursuit of athlete success within the high performance sport system be examined with some urgency. Subsequently an equitable formula should be established to ensure that for every dollar spent on the development of high performance athletes and coaches, a related amount

be spent on administrative skill development through a federally-funded system of lifelong learning and certified continual professional development for those engaged in their support. This particularly so as more retiring athletes move into the administration of the sport they are passionate about, and have spent years representing their country in; consequently there is an increasing need for such a high-level commitment and investment in skills development activity to appropriately equip them to continue to serve their sport and successive generations of Canadian athletes performing on the international stage.

Question 4 seeks responses in relation to service delivery programming, and suggests three key components of such delivery. It is the contention of this submission that these three components need to be expanded to include a fourth, the vital area of organizational administrative capacity. Once this has been done, the following elements need to be considered:

- Rapid evaluation of the core skill and competency levels required with the administration of world class high performance sport;
- Documentation of the core administrative and operational processes that MSOs, NSOs, and PSOs fulfill in order that high performance athletes can prepare for, attend and successfully compete at national, international and world events; and
- Design and implementation of a system of accredited continuing professional development in the administration of high performance sport that recognizes the outcomes from the above two points and addresses any current and future skill and competence deficits.

Question 5 refers to performance targets for athletes attending the 2014 and 2016 Games. This response suggests that, in conjunction with the establishment of performance targets for Canadian athletes at the next two Olympiads and beyond, the federal government and its partners in high performance sport develop a strategic plan aimed at the rapid implementation of an agenda, and associated academic framework, for the development of organizational capacity of those involved in the administration of high performance sport through the application of the established principles of lifelong learning and directly linked to a certified program of continuing professional development.

This response links into **Question 6**, which relates to high-level strategies for the development of resources necessary to support the continued excellence of high performance athletes. By recognizing and adequately resourcing the tripartite relationship between athlete, coach and administration in the manner described above, and consequently developing the skills and abilities of the individuals who manage high performance sport in Canada, the overall system will naturally generate higher levels of efficiency and attain greater levels of high visibility success on the international stage. This will, in turn, have a powerful and positive impact on the ability of Canadian high performance sports to attract long-term future funding opportunities from successful Canadian businesses wishing to enter international markets or develop those existing after the financial resources mentioned in the Guidelines are terminated.

In conclusion this submission respectfully requests panel members to:

- Consider the points made above;
- Recognize the value that appropriate levels of organizational capacity and a program of continuous professional development for the administrators of high performance sport would add to the future success of Canada's high performance athletes on international and world stages; and
- Incorporate the ongoing development of organizational and administrative capacity into the agenda currently under discussion.

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